

WIPE DISPENSER AND THREADER FOR WIPE DISPENSER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to containers for dispensing pre-moistened wipes, and more particularly to a device for threading an initial wipe through the 5 opening of the wipe dispenser.

Wipe dispensers have long been well known in the art of pre-moistened wipes, especially baby wipes, and have recently become well known for use with similar products such as hand wipes and wipes for car washing. A typical wipe dispenser consists of a container, often cylindrical in shape, with a cap attached to one end. The cap generally 10 includes a small opening that allows a user to pull wipes through the opening without having to remove the entire cap and reach into the container. To increase the ease of dispensing the wipes, the wipes are generally joined together inside the container in roll form or accordion form so that once a first wipe has been pulled through the opening, each additional wipe will consequently follow through the opening. Lines of weakening separate the wipes, and 15 consequently the pulled wipe tears from the web as the wipe clears the opening. Usually, this leaves the next wipe exposed and eliminates the need to open the cap and pull each individual wipe through the opening.

One difficulty in conventional prior art dispensers is the process of removing the initial wipe. Generally, when a consumer purchases a conventional wipe dispenser the entire 20 roll of wipes is inside the container. In order to access the initial wipe, the user must remove the cap and reach into the container to pull out the first wipe in the roll. Locating the first wipe on the inner diameter of the roll while reaching inside the container can be difficult and

messy. Further, it may be difficult to thread the first wipe through the opening in the cap before reattaching the cap to the container.

Additionally, even after the first wipe is threaded through the opening, there is a possibility that a subsequent wipe will not be pulled through the opening, requiring the user to 5 re-open the container and repeat the process.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The aforementioned difficulties are overcome by the present invention by a threader for a conventional wipe dispenser to allow access to the initial wipe as well as any subsequent wipes in the container. In a preferred embodiment, the threader is a wand having a 10 hook at one end and a handle at the other. The threader is generally linear and is of sufficient length to fit within the lid of the container. The lid is provided with snaps or other attachment means so that the threader can be securely fastened to the lid when not in use.

A user would first open the lid and remove the threader. She would then place the threader inside the container and use the hook on the threader to snare a wipe. She would then 15 pull the wipe through the top of the container. The threader would be reattached to the lid so that it could be later be used if retrieval of the wipe is later needed.

The present invention therefore greatly eases the wipe dispensing process and also saves time in accessing the first wipe. Additionally, the manufacturing process for the container is greatly simplified since only the lid needs be modified to incorporate the wand. The 20 remainder of the container, including the disposition of the wipes within the container, as well as the process for assembling the container would not need to be changed.

These and other objects, advantages, and features of the invention will be readily understood and appreciated by reference to the detailed description of the preferred embodiment and the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 FIG. 1 is a sectional view of the wipe dispenser of the present invention with the threader attached to the lid.

FIG. 2 is a top view of the cap.

FIG. 3 is a side elevational of the threader.

FIG. 4 is a sectional view of the wipe dispenser with the threader in the interior of
10 the wipe dispenser.

FIG. 5 shows an extensible threader with the arm retracted.

FIG. 6 shows the extensible threader with the arm extended.

FIG. 7 shows a foldable threader in the unfolded position.

FIG. 8 shows a foldable threader in the folded position.

15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A wipe dispenser in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIG. 1 and generally designated 5. Wipe dispenser 5 generally includes a elongated sheet of pre-moistened wipes 10 in roll form within container 12. Container 12 is conventional and is well known in the art. Cap 14 covers the top of container 12. Threader 16 is intended to be adapted to fit a wide variety of shapes and sizes of these conventional containers and caps, but will be described in connection with the particular container 12. Lid 18 is hinged
20 at the perimeter of cap 14 so that it may be opened to expose the wipes 10.

FIG. 2 shows the cap 14 with lid 18 in the open position. Threader 16 is held to the interior of lid 18 by a pair of snaps 20, 22. Cap 14 is generally cylindrical, but includes a recessed interior 24. Interior cap wall 26 attaches recessed interior 24 to upper surface 28 of cap 14. Recessed interior 24 contains foramen 30 and ovular hole 32. Canal 33 connects foramen 30 5 to ovular hole 32.

Ovular hole 32 is of sufficient size and shape to accommodate threader 16 and to allow access of threader to wipes 10. Foramen 30 is generally circular.

FIG. 3 shows threader 16. Threader 16 is generally elongated, with hook 34 at one end. Neck 36 attaches hook 34 to handle 38. Handle 38 is adapted so as to easily fit within 10 the hand.

Threader 16 is of sufficient size so that it will not readily fall entirely through ovular hole 32 or foramen 30. If a user were to lose his grasp on the threader, a portion of the threader would extend through ovular hole 32 so that it might be easily retrieved.

FIG. 4 shows the operation of threader 16. After purchase, a user manually 15 removes threader 16 from lid 18. The user then places threader 16 into dispensing container 12 through ovular hole 32. The user then manipulates threader 16 so as to cause hook 34 to engage the inner diameter of the wipes 10. Hook 34 then catches on an inner layered wipe from wipes 10. The user then pulls the inner layered wipe through ovular hole 32. The wipe is then 20 disengaged from hook 34. User then pulls the wipe through canal 33 into foramen 30. The wipe is then pulled with sufficient force to tear it from the web. A second wipe is then partially pulled through foramen 30. Subsequent removal of wipes continually replaces any removed wipe with a subsequent wipe until all wipes have been used.

After retrieving the first wipe, threader 16 is then returned to lid 18 for later use.

If for any reason a subsequent wipe is not pulled into position in foramen 30, then threader 16 can be used to retrieve the web.

FIG. 5 shows a different embodiment for a threader. Threader 50 is comprised of 5 handle 52 and extension arm 54. Extension arm 54 is slideably contained within handle 52. Haft 56 is affixed to extension arm 54. Hook 56 is attached to extension arm 54. When pressure is applied to haft 56, extension arm 54 slides out of handle 52, as shown in FIG. 6.

FIG. 7 show a further embodiment for a threader. Threader 60 is shown in the extended position. Hook 62 is attached to neck 64. Neck 64 is attached to handle 66 by way of 10 hinge 68. Hinge 68 could be a film hinge. Brace 70 is firmly attached to handle 66, and provides support to neck 64 whenever threader 60 is used to snare the web.

FIG. 8 shows threader 60 in a folded position. Hinge 68 allows neck 64 to fold over handle 66.

The above descriptions are those of preferred embodiments of the invention.

15 Various alterations and changes can be made without departing from the spirit and broader aspects of the invention as defined in the appended claims, which are to be interpreted in accordance with the principles of patent law including the doctrine of equivalents. Any reference to claim elements in the singular, for example, using the articles "a," "an," "the" or "said," is not to be construed as limiting the element to the singular.